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## SECONDARY SCHOOL CONFERENCE ON GOOD AND BAD DISCIPLINE

D. Y. COMSTOCK, Principal of St. Johnsbury Academy, St. Johnsbury, Vt., Leader: The purpose and aim of discipline are to secure improvement of the student in manners and morals. There are three classes of offenses against recognized standards—sins of premeditation, sins of natural tendency, and sins of surprise. The vast majority of misdeeds on the part of pupils is to be assigned to the second and third classes, and not to the first.

Discipline, to be properly and effectively applied, calls for either special endowment of sound judgment and insight into human nature, or else a condition of mind and heart resulting from rigid self-training in all that makes for patience, calm and judicial temper, the balancing of the rights of the individual and of the student-body, and, last but by no means least, sympathy and faith in possibilities. The range from the executioner to the invertebrate and gelatinous, in the administration of discipline, is a long one, and the stages of the interval are marked by as many phases of the sublime and the ridiculous, wisdom and folly, as are the changes of a New England spring. More cases of irritation, in school government, are due to lack of wisdom on the part of teachers than to premeditated misdeeds on the part of pupils. The mistaken notion that penalty, in order to be effective and dignified, must always be immediate, is a fruitful source of trouble. Nothing is lost—much gained—through balancing evidence, biding one's time, awaiting occasions. The teacher is too likely to take counsel of temporary, or passing, states of mind. Scrooge told Marley's ghost that he "might be a piece of undigested cheese."

The greatest sin of discipline to which a teacher is exposed is that of taking unfair advantage of a pupil's peculiarities of temperament, chiefly of temper, instead of deferring serious discussion or the imposing of penalties until the boy or girl is in a fair condition of mind to be judged. The pupil is rare whose sense of justice is not highly developed. Any act of discipline that appeals to this sense of justice will be accepted as fair. A teacher can better afford to be sinned against twenty times, in matters of recitation-room dishonesty and kindred acts, than wrongfully to accuse a pupil once. Neither saint nor sinner is helped by public censure, but rather hardened. A willingness to acknowledge error of judgment or mistaken censure strengthens immensely the respect that students have for teachers, and creates greater confidence in them and in their dealings. Undue familiarity, the absence of "a certain distance," cannot but induce a weakened respect for a teacher. Friendliness, kindly sympathy, and deep interest in the individual need not imply loss of proper dignity on the part of the teacher.

A fruitful source of irritation in school government is the failure of superintendent or principal, or both, to maintain fearless, frank, yet kindly relations with their teachers, in pointing out to them evident casts of mind or temperament that might lead to disaster, if not modified. A little prevention of this sort would, in

most cases, obviate, or at least minimize, the clashes and frictions that arise in school life. Such neglect of duty toward teachers is simply criminal.

Discipline is not merely for school—it is for life. While we must inflict penalties at times, let us do it with an ever-present faith in the better part of the pupil's nature. While we strive to eradicate the "it," let us ever remember the boy or girl to whom the "it" clings as an expression of the worse—not the better—side of the pupil's nature.

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#### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CONFERENCE ON SCHOOL INCENTIVES

SUPERINTENDENT W. D. PARKINSON, Waltham, Leader: The school should marshal to its aid the incentives which originate in the home, in society, in the church. It may bring to bear whatever natural and social impulses serve to set in motion its activities, but its aim should be to transmute these impulses into corresponding spiritual interests, and to gear its activities to those permanent motives which mature into principles of action and constitute the fibers of character.

Artificial incentives, such as marks, rewards, penalties, prizes, honors, promotions, may be erected like follow-flags to beckon toward goals too distant to attract the child's interest; but when such guide-signs cease to be in line, or when made ends in themselves, they become misleading. So far, then, as the school employs such artificial incentives, great care should be taken that they point to just conceptions of success, of duty, of honor, of truth; and as the pupils advance in years, the nearer and more material incentives should be supplanted by the more remote and spiritual.

The school should be alert to seize upon the passing interests of the children, and to strike while the iron is hot. But the well-disciplined school, like the disciplined mind, will choose which incentives shall prevail, and will cultivate industry, persistence, courage, steadfastness—virtues which consist in the sacrifice of nearer to more remote ends.

Incentives, however weighty, lose force by frequent or indiscriminate emphasis. The standards of the school, therefore, should discriminate between error and wrongdoing, between information and understanding, between incidents and principles, between propriety and rectitude; and its bestowal of approval and disapproval, of praise and reproach, should be kept within the same bounds of propriety and of good taste as obtain in good society.

The emphasis should be upon those incentives which impel rather than propel; upon hope rather than fear, cheer rather than rebuke, self-respect rather than shame, anticipation of success rather than warning of failure.

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#### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CONFERENCE ON THE PARENT PROBLEM

ISAAC HUSE, principal of Franklin Street Grammar School, Manchester, N. H., Leader: If, in addition to the careful analysis of the "parent problem" by Professor Wells, we could have had the address by Professor Locke, of Chi-